THE PRINCESS OF IDA

AND OTHER POEMS

WILLIAM SHEPPERLEY

EX·LIBRIS
HORACE
SHIPP

THE PRIESTESS OF IDA

AND OTHER POEMS

THE
PRIESTESS OF IDA

AND OTHER POEMS

By

WILLIAM SHEPPERLEY

"O Laborum dulce Lenimen,
Mihi cunque salve rite vocanti."
—Horace I. 33.

LONDON
JONES AND EVANS' BOOKSHOP LTD.
1913

Printed by BUTLER & TANNER, *Frome and London.*

To

BERTHA, LOUIS AND FREDERICK

A Dedication

Say, Muse, unto my children, fondly cherished,
To whom this earnest of my love I left,
How, in a time when young Life's sweetness perished,
Of Hope, and all that Hope can give, bereft—
A wand'rer from the happy Land of Childhood,
I gathered fragrant blossoms up and down,
In Fancy's Grove and Dreamland's silent wildwood,
And twined them thus into a fadeless crown.

THE AUTHOR

avails himself of this opportunity to express his heartfelt thanks to the eminent Poet, Mr. Stephen Phillips, who first gave publicity to his works in the *Poetry Review*; to Mr. John G. Wilson, Editor of the *Odd Volume*, to whose kindly interest the publication of this book is due, and to those dear friends Mr. A. H. Bridgman and Mr. John F. Burton, for sympathy and encouragement which no gratitude can repay.

Fern Nook, 73, Welbourne Road,
High Cross, Tottenham.
June, 1913.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Ode to a Butterfly	9
An Apostrophe to Death	12
Lines to the Ocean	15
One Twilight Hour	18
A Song of Curfew	22
Lines Written in St. Paul's Cathedral	22
Ode to the Evening Star	25
His Gifts	30
The Weaver	31
Janua Vitæ	34
The Lesson	35
Sonnets:—	
I To Dante	39
II To Keats	40
III To My Infant Daughter	40
Horace:—	
Ode XVIII, Book 2	41
Ode VII, Book 4	42
A Tender Chord	43
Chatterton	46
Lines to a Skylark.	48
The Priestess of Ida:—	
I Love's Birth	50
II Love's Life	60
III Love's Passing	68
The Lilies	77

Ode to a Butterfly

1

WEE, lissom Ariel, on wings of sheen,
Silver-brocaded, and with gems aglow,
That in this cottage-garden flit'st between
Twin arum lilies, swaying to and fro,
Their grails of blossom-snow:
Breeze-fanned, sun-fondled, in the dewy air,
Like dream-land elf, in brightness only seen,
Of all created Things, most frailsome and most fair.

2

A flutter like to zephyr, fragrance-fraught,
Stirring a harp's strings upon Helicon:
A frolic, as of Rabelaisian Thought,
Dancing thro' sadsome mind its rigadon,
Till Mirth a Fort hath won—
Such art thou, pigmy Halcyon, fain of Life,
One soul that ne'er by anguish is distraught,
One Being, heart-serene, in world with troubles rife.

3

A minion Fay phantasmal, Spark of Light
And careless Joyance, thou wert never sent
To hurtle those gay wings 'gainst murk of Night,
Nor be with Sorrow in her dungeon pent,
Nor with bane-pollen sprent:
For thou art mated to th' insouciant throng
Of Nature's dear Bohemia, fancy-bright,
Arcadia's vagabond, with life a summer long.

4

Light as an urchin's sigh, the tears of Joy,
Thy pinions waft from spicy mint to flow'r:
Arch and inconstant as the quivered Boy,
Jilting a Court of Beauties in an hour,
Pert Gallant of the bow'r,
That, on the vermeil rose, the white forgets:
Pilf'rer of sweetnesses which never cloy,
The vagrant Romeo of countless Juliets!

5

Nor woes nor throes can touch thee, dainty Thing,
War and Disaster leave thee un-dismayed;
The miseries that Greed and Treach'ry bring,
Have never broken on thy honey-raid,
And am'rous escapade;
I picture thee, on Waterloo's wild morn,
In harvest-field, whilst Terror's clarions ring,
Sipping Adonis-flow'rs, 'mongst the red, trampled
Corn.

6

I see thee on the altar-garlands rest,
In cloister chapel, where kneel nuns at pray'r :
Or wooing rose on Desdemona's breast,
In Beatrice's hand, or Laura's hair :
Or, when forlorn-eyed Care
Half-opes the shutter of a shadowed room,
I watch thee caper, thro' the air oppressed,
O'er funeral tapers, wreaths of amaranth bloom.

7

Yet, wert not always Psyche ! . . . Once, a worm,
Of the earth, earthy, as man's mortal guise,
A creeping parasite, of graceless form,
Till dazzling wings were given thee, to rise
Like Soul, unto its skies :
Brought from a pent-house into freedom's light,
As barque, to tranquil haven, from the storm—
Oblivious, in thy bliss, of slough of yester-night.

8

Not thine the lav'rock's wings, to cleave th' expanse
Of golden mist, at sun-gates of the morn :
But gossamer of ouphen dalliance,
Cradled on petals, and on breezes borne :
Nor thine the pinions, torn
In eagle-conflict, which pursue a road
Thro' daylight, star-light, gloom and radiance,
To Heights which Home-land are : the Phœnix-life's abode.

As tripped, in old Provence, to gay guitar,
At Court of Love, the tasselled Troubadour,
Thou prankest where the joyeuse Damsels are,
Greensward beneath thee—song-thrilled heav'ns oer;
Can thy heart crave for more?
Or hath it yearnings for that sphere unknown,
Bestirring thee to soar, afar, afar,
And rise—for ever rise—till Love and thou are one?

An Apostrophe to Death

"Nil aliud ac Umbra atque Flatus est Homo."

I

LOVE'S lamp is out... Thy touch hath quenched its Light,
O Death! and of Life's music silence made:
Hushed all its melody in mute affright.
Since, on its dulcet keys, thy hand was laid:
Into a blossomed Garden, echoing song,
With crafty tread, all unsuspect, unseen,
Thief of my Joyance, thou didst creep along,
When heart was light, and summer hour serene.
Untimely tithe! What art thou, awesome power?
Why, in its lustrous bloom, didst dash so sweet a flower?

2

Warm Life's cold Sister, that, with stealthy wings,
Shadowest Earth and Time, and visitest,
In thy un-even flight, all breath-fraught Things:
Destiny's Ministress, of stern behest—
Grim Pilgrim from the silenced centuries,
That waned before thee, like the day to gloom,
Of all their glory left but dust, which lies
'Neath feet that thou art hurrying to the tomb:
What countless generations hast thou mown,
Viewless, with still-some scythe! . . . this young-
est, too, thine own!

3

Unending are thy victories! thy Pæans
Fill all the realms of humans with dismay . . .
Thou hast been Conqueror thro' all the Æons,
Cæsars and slaves submitting to thy sway:
Stern Leveller, without respect of thrones,
Privilege, purple robe, or callings proud.
Changing the flush of youth to stenchful bones,
Beauty to loathsomeness, Bride's veil to shroud:
Tiaras, sceptres, cankering with rust,
Sacred and vile alike, thou minglest in one dust.

4

If fair or dread thou art, we do but see
With earth-averted eyes, which, as they gaze,
May not interpret what they view of thee,
But, at thy recognition, dim and glaze:

We grudge thy harvests, at thy advent quake,
Would bar Life's door against thy burglary :
With antidote and balsam 'surance make,
And with sanct unctions seek to distance thee :
And yet, if cam'st thou NOT ! if hopeless Pain,
Old Age, distorted Birth, should call on thee in vain !

5

Art thou inconscient ? Dar'st thou not upbraid,
When blood of martyr and of sage is spilt,
When smiling babes are spitted on the blade,
And Innocence is sacrificed for Guilt ?
Stoodst thou impassive by the guillotine,
By cross, and wheel, and block with life-stream wet,
When, scorned and curst, the Righteous died serene,
From Abel unto Marie-Antoinette ?
Couldst thou, unmoved, Socrates numbing see ?
Did Calvary's loud cry appal not also *thee* ?

6

Didst thou exult or mourn, when thou didst strike
All Egypt's first-born, in that night of woe ?
Or, when, in hour of terror, not unlike,
Sennacherib's mailed host was smitten low ?
When, swooping down upon pestif'rous air
Of plague-rid lands, thy scythe did myriads reap,
Or when gaunt Famine, choked with horrid fare,
Invoked thee, frenzied, didst thou smile or weep ?

Or as, 'midst holocaust of heroes slain,
Thy pallid hands didst lave, on War's distracted
plain ?

7

Herald of Woe, or Harbinger of Bliss,
Thou art but Life's transition, not its end :
The portal of more lasting sphere than this,
Whose ill or weal doth not on thee depend :
To some, the dread Disaster—Ghoul of Night,
Whose voice, like Harpy's screech, affrights the
mind :
To some, the heav'n-sent messenger of Light,
Winged with a blessed promise to mankind !
May we, strength-houselled, when thou comest,
say :
Thy sting is impotent . . . thy vict'ry snatched
away !

Lines to the Ocean

1

THOU art not Man's Dominion, Ocean lone !
No earthly sceptre o'er thy waves has sway,
Which ever roll before the Great White Throne,
A silvern path, God's wonderful Highway
Of mysteries and silences divine :
Unfathomed, and unconquered as the skies,
Which crown thee with the glory of a Dome,
Whose star-lamps, mirrored, shine

Upon thy breakers, and to wand'rers' eyes,
Afar, on lonesome track, recall the lights of Home.

2

What pregnant years have rolled, since, ancient Flood,
Upon thy frosted face, the Darkness lay;
When He that called thee forth, and saw thee good,
Illumed thy grandeurs with the Star of Day.
The fickle Land has doffed her garb and guise,
And donned and doffed anew, with wanton whims,
But thou, 'spite all thy variance, art same,
As when of old didst rise
Freed from an Ice-jail by the young Sun's gleams,
And with glad ebb and flow, unto His summons came.

3

What marvels in thy chasms unexplored,
Where bask, in strange abodes, weird gorgeous things . . .
Goblin-like forms, a gem-scaled Undine horde,
In caverns where Æolian music rings,
Or in the maze of forests coralline,
Upon whose sparkling sands finned Griffins glide,
'Neath tow'ring crags of phosphorescent glow,
And rainbow hyaline:
A life-thronged world of wonders, undescried,
Down, beyond soundings all, in deeps the depths below.

4

We love thee, mighty ocean! We have heard
Thy thunder-music alway in our soul:
Strains that the loyal heart have ever stirred,
And made our shore, on which thy billows roll,
Dearest of homelands, and ourselves thy sons,
Launching our barques upon thee, bold and free,
As ever did our fathers; 'neath thy wave
Laying those cherished ones,
Who gave their strength and length of days to thee,
That hast their cradle been, their dwelling and their grave.

5

For beauteous Thou, beyond Earth's comeliness!
Th' Almighty's Hand hath set His mark on thee,
The mirror of His awesome loneliness,
The likeness of His immortality:
Thine are the attributes of the Divine:
Potent, mysterious, beneficient thou,
As puny we, spite battleship's array,
Whose thunders mimic thine,
Which are as leaves upon thy storm beat' brow,
As foam by breakers tossed—as bubbles of the spray.

6

Deep, dark thou rollest o'er the tombs of Brave,
And darker still, where Empires lie confined,
Great continent and peoples, in vast grave
That hides the records of half human-kind:

Ten thousand fathoms 'neath thy coralled sands,
What secrets of lost sciences are stored,
What strange mysterious tomes of wisdom old,
Marvels of vanished hands,
In caves thy monsters e'en have ne'er explored;
A myriad merchant fleets; an Ind of gems and gold.

7

Secure, thy treasury! . . . all Love hath owned
Is garnered safe, a midget or a world;
The fallen star, in glory once enthroned,
The tiny weevil on a petal curled—
Thy jewels thou shalt yield, O Guardian Sea,
The secrets of thy fastnesses reveal,
Back, to the arms of Life, thy dead restore:
But must it ever be,
That Day shall wake upon his misty hill,
And shine, belovèd Main, upon thy tides no more? *

* "And there shall be no more sea."—St. John.

One Twilight Hour

1

"WHAT is't you say of passing hence, dear wife,
Bidding me speak whilst still you understand?
How can I let you go from out my life,
Yield up to Death this little clasping hand?

Our boy is hastening home to see you, dear,
And Madge has sent this pretty bunch of blooms,
Kind Nature's way-gifts to the parting year—
Michaelmas Daisies and Chrysanthemums:
Like those in that old garden, far away,
Where, long ago, for the first time we met . . .
The mazy garden, where we used to stray:
—Do you remember?"
"Could I e'er forget?"

2

"I was a wayward, danger-daring boy,
Dreaming of ocean wracks, and war's alarms:
And you, a tender maiden, sweet and coy,
With blue eyes fathoms deep, and chubby arms:
I loved you, 'mongst the blossoms of that May,
Unselfishly, as only pure heart can:
A wee, white violet you cast away,
I treasured like a magic talisman:
And 'ere we parted, one bright April morn,
—Dear Heart, methinks I hear your accents yet—
We plighted vows that ne'er have been forsworn . . .
Do you remember?"
"Could I e'er forget?"

3

"Then came a storm: the broil of Youth's wild riot—
Its hot blood dancing can-cans in each vein,
Unhallowed doubts marring the spirit's quiet,
And wine-lees misting the o'er-busy brain;

Heyday of revelry, as brief as bright,
Whose strange exotics withered at the touch,
Whose shadowy pleasures vanished from my sight,
Like golden sun-beams from a miser's clutch.
Ah me! the mute reproaches of your sighs,
When once again, by heavenly chance, we met...
The look that saved me in your pleading eyes!
Do you remember?"
"Could I e'er forget?"

4

"Then we were wed, and soon I knew your worth;
I had not dreamt that life could be so blest:
I found an Eden 'midst the wastes of earth,
Your arms my Haven in the great Un-rest.
And then our first child came—so frail, so fair!
Heavenly Stella, beauteous Star that shone
Over our path, and shed what radiance there,
For a few summer-tides, and then was gone!
And as we stood beside the little grave—
So wide, so deep—with bitter pangs beset,
We clung but closer, our one heart more brave—
Do you remember?"
"Could I e'er forget?"

5

"The years went by, the bairns around us grew;
Sorrows and joys made up Life's little part,
Until there came a blast that chilled us through,
Grim Poverty, with all its shame and smart:

Old friends forsook us, mates of halcyon hours,
Fortune's scene shifted, from a smiling land
Of sylvan quiet, with its birds and flowers,
To this dark Alley off the noisy Strand:
Fierce was the struggle, un-successful long,
But you did share the burden of the fret,
Till in your strength my jaded soul grew strong.
Do you remember?"

"Could I e'er forget?"

6

"See, dearest, thro' yon casement shines a star,
Filling our little solitude with light:
From some strange World, immeasurably far,
Travels this Ray of Hope into our Night,
Winged with a message for the aching heart,
In its ado of wonderment and pain . . .
Love's World is one World; tho' awhile ye part,
Love's Life is endless—ye will meet again!

* * * * *

Dim grow your eyes, and tighter clasps your hand;
Promise, dear Heart, whilst Time unites us yet,
To bless and guide me from the Better Land—
Shall you remember?"

"I—will not for—get!"

A Song of Curfew

DING-dong, Curfew Bell!
Cover fires of hate and spleen,
Angry flames of passion quell,
Let there be peace at E'en!
Ding-dong!
O'er the snug cottage, where peasant-wife sings,
Lullaby, Baby, whilst cradle she swings:
O'er the great castle, where bairn-less and old,
Sighs the rich lady in jewels and gold.
Ding, Dong!
O'er the bright mead-hall, where revels the Court,
Merry with music and laughter and sport;
O'er the dark chamber of mourning and pain,
Where the strong heart-strings are sund'ring atwain.
Ding, Dong!
O'er the thronged Tavern, where roysterers brawl,
O'er the still grave-yard, where Death hushes all.
Ding, Dong, Curfew Bell!
Must we quench Love's light as well?
No! that fire must ne'er expire,
Ding-dong, Curfew Bell!

Lines Written in St. Paul's Cathedral

THE City's ceaseless traffic roars around me,
I see the myriads press on dusty road,
And pass, from din and clamour that confound me,
Into the quiet of this House of God.

Calm as that silent Cell, my spirit's cloister,
Reached by a hidden path, and secret stair,
Is this seclusion from the rush and royster,
The strife of factions, and the frets of care.

In these still aisles, by praise and pray'r made holy,
Are loofs of caste and prides of life ignored;
Here, rich and poor, the puissant and the lowly,
Are levelled in the presence of the Lord.

This mighty Temple, built on Faith's foundation,
High in our midst a sacred Symbol stands:
The emblem of the Conscience of a Nation,
Service of loyal hearts, and toilsome Hands.

'Neath the vast Dome a solemn cadence lingers,
On Day's last lights, and gloaming's shadows dim,
As of some harp, tuned by ecstatic fingers,
In the Cathedral of the Seraphim.

Here, all is Peace: the Peace 'yond understanding;
Its heav'nly Prince hath here an earthly Throne,
In a scared World of legions ever banding,
Of fleets and hosts to Xerxes' dreams unknown.

I think of the dim centuries between us,
And those stern Over-lords of Conq'ring Rome,
When incense burned to Jupiter and Venus,
Beneath the hoary Pantheon's star-lit dome;

When Christ's young Bride, from Catacomb's dark
prison,
Beheld insatiate Cæsar's haughty sway,
Like dream of splendour on the world arisen,
Like frightful shadow vanishing away.

The pomp and glory of its Throne imperial,
Its distant colonies, and Empire vast,
All fading, like to Desert vision aerial,
Into the night Cimmerian of the Past!

What if such Doom this Empire overwhelm,
When at the zenith of its Wealth and Fame,
If, like huge ship, with Torpor at the helm,
It crash on reefs of Luxury and Shame?

In yonder stately choir, long, lofty, lonely,
Lit by weird shimmer of mysterious gleam,
Majestic forms, seen by my soul's eyes only,
Arise before me, as awake, I dream.

They, in their day, denouncing wild ambition,
The lust of Conquest, and the thirst for blood,
Came with a blest crusade, a holy mission,
To spread the Empire of Man's Brotherhood.

They point to Apathy, that undefended
Would leave our shores, to idle at a game:
To grasping Greed, by down-trod serfs attended,
To Vice, that on the Highways, flaunts its shame:

To restless hordes of Anarchy advancing,
By Furies led, with Discord's pæans dire:
To gem-decked Folly, on a greensward dancing,
Where seethes, beneath, a fierce volcano fire.

To Luxury, lulled by entrancing numbers,
That drown the stert'rous groanings from the deep,
Where Nemesis lies drugged in night-mare slumbers . . .
The Strong One, not yet startled from his sleep!

They ask, have all the warnings of the Sages,
Who spoke with prophet voice, unheeded been ?
And was the travail of the strenuous ages,
But dusty shifting of a showman's scene ?

Is poverty less keen, and wealth more gracious,
Has Wrong more enemies, and God more praise,
Is Truth more cherished, Mammon less rapacious,
And home-life purer, than in Cæsar's days ?

O Shelt'ring Fane ! If, in thy midst united,
The server and the served their feuds could end . . .
The ills, that stifle social weal, be righted,
And noble Rank of noble Toil be friend. . . .

If, 'neath this Dome, raised to the Highest Glory,
Our strifes and bitter rivalries could cease,
The brightest chapter of our nation's story,
Would yet be written in the Book of Peace.

An Ode to the Evening Star

(*Dedicated, by gracious permission, to Her Majesty Queen Alexandra*)

DEDICATION

O Lady, on whose brow hath Sorrow set,
Above imperial gems,
The Halo of her sacred Coronet,
Most blest of Diadems :
Since He, Who trod the Wine-press all alone,
With suffering Heart forlorn,
Wears now, on His effulgent Triumph-throne,
His passion's Crown of Thorn . . .

Accept this homage of a loyal Soul,
That, too, hath felt the pain,
Which binds Humanity, from pole to pole,
As with a golden chain.

I

STAR of the Night, how beautiful thou art,
In the far silence of thy trackless way,
Where, like a cloistered Maid, thou dwell'st apart,
From all the turmoils of distracted Day,
Impelling restless soul to higher things,
Which, like to watchman on lone parapet,
Thro' vigils of long night communes with thee,
Till Thought, like Ariel, wings:
Whilst sordid wights in dreams their cares forget,
And heard, in darkling glens, the Raven's Threnody.

2

What myst'ry lies about thee, wond'rous Light,
Beacon of Ages, shining thro' all past,
From the first looming of Creation's night,
Eternity's far yestern—to this last.
Changeless, sublime, as when our Earth-speck came
Into the bosom of un-bounded space,
A Thing of frost-stayed vapours, dusts and breath
Of the sun's kindly flame,
Then rock, flood, herb and life, and Human Race—
Eden and aftermath—of Toil, and Pain and Death.

3

And Thou, mute Warden thro' the hourless Time
Of countless Æons, in thy course serene,
Sawst age to age succeed, and clime to clime,
Like shadows cast on Nature's Kinema screen:
Civilizations buried 'neath the wave
Of oceans recordless; Empire and Race
Vanished beyond recall; Dynasties old,
The Good, the Wise, the Brave,
To dusty Limbo pass, without a trace
On Sphinx-like Mother Earth, or Clio's book of Gold.

4

Thou canst not know! . . . where'er thy beam hath crost,
It shone on woes the grave alone can end:
On broken hearts, bewailing what is lost,
On spirits that in travail Godwards tend . . .
Who heav'nsick gave Love's tendrest name to thee,
Bright jetsam of the Glory Infinite,
Breath of eternal Being, as are they
Who, yearning to be free,
Would seraph-like o'erspan the gulfs of Night,
And be as one with thee, absorbed in thy calm Ray!

5

For myriads such thy radiance have scanned,
Filled with what thoughts of Dread, Hope, Doubt and Love,

From Faithdom's crumbled shrines of ev'ry Land . . .
Of Isis, Brahma, Buddha, Baal and Jove;
Nor marvel that thy splendour did o'erawe
Giants primeval, in their rugged caves
On horror-haunted wolds, where Mastodon
With Basilisk waged war,
By darksome crags, dashed by tempestuous waves,
Who for their God adored a Lamp afront His throne.

6

So once, some naked Ishmael, on the plain
Of dark Euphrates, 'ere the bulwarks stood
Of Babylon superb, invoked thy main,
Purpling the barren rock with hated blood,
As later, from Sinai's mist-veiled crest,
Heart-broken Moses, bowed in wrath and shame,
Hearing a chant idolatrous below,
Cursed whom he fain had blest,
And calling on Jehovah's outraged name,
Hurled His dread Mandates down, in thy impassive glow.

7

As in Gethsemane, a Nazarene
That once in Joseph's village workshop toiled,
Watched, thro' His agony, thy orb serene,
Like victim, God-abandoned, Satan-foiled:
And, lifting up the Chalice of His Pain,

'Spite bursting heart and brow that sweated blood,
Betwixt Eternal ire and mortal woe,
Wiped out Transgression's stain,
Save only from the cross-beams of a Rood,
And rose, sublime as thou, for last tremendous Throe!

8

So oft, from lorn Ravenna's pine-clad height,
The exiled Dante did thy lustre see—
As, in the anguish of one August night,
Young Chatterton's sad eyes looked up to thee:
So, Corsican Lætitia's fate-urged son,
The glare of Austerlitz all-faded dim,
Beheld thy gleam athwart a widening gloom—
Crowner, uncrowned—undone—
As died the echoes of triumphant Hymn,
On a drear ocean-rock, last Empire, save the Tomb.

9

Thus thou o'er poor Humanity hast shone,
And o'er what wondrous worlds beyond its ken,
Whose bulwarked secrets thou dost gaze upon,
—Abodes of Angels, Demons, Monsters, Men?
And still shalt shine, when this potential world,
Of ermined pomp, mailed power, incensed pride,
Hath melted into air, nor left a jot,
Whiff to oblivion swirled,
With the fond Idols that it deified,
Science, lore, laws, creeds, all; dream of a dream forgot.

His Gifts

HE giveth His belovèd, Care: the Pain
No balm of Earth can cure;
The rack of mind, the heart-pang, and the strain
That earnest souls endure,
In conflict with the wanton and the base:
Pride's taunt, the tempter's snare . . .
Shrouding, in mists, the brightness of His Face,
He giveth Care.

He giveth His belovèd, Toil; a Work
The brave alone can do;
Love's labour, that the world's most puissant shirk,
Stern travail of the Few:
The heat and burden of exacting day,
Whilst idlers garner spoil,
Sending His own upon a thorny way,
He giveth Toil.

He giveth His belovèd, Sleep: the Peace
That guerdons valiant Fight:
Slumber, like babes', whose fretful pulings cease
In tender arms, at night;
Safe from the bale of moon, and glare of sun,
His wearied ones doth keep;
Sending the even-calm, when Rest is won,
He giveth Sleep.

The Weaver (written 1876.)

A WEAVER-LAD sat musing in bare and squalid room,
And thoughts, not of his choosing, came o'er him at the loom:
Betwixt the cross-beams olden, the thrums of dingy hue,
All silvern shone and golden, as swift the shuttle flew;
As in a dream he blended the threads of Fancy bright,
Like glints of jewels splendid, upon his Loom of Light,
The warp was all a-glitter, the woof of starry sheen,
The chamber, with its litter, became a radiant scene:
A land of sparkling fountains, of valleys gay with bloom,
Of glades, and wood-clad mountains, unknown to Death and Gloom;
Fair forests spread before him, bestirred by summer wind,
And sapphire heavens o'er him, like ocean unconfined,
A host of shadowy creatures flit by him as he wove,
With gladness on their features, and spirits fraught with love;
A hand, from earth-life banished, clasped once again his own;

He saw a Face long vanished—heard a lost Voice's tone,
That to his ears did utter unfathomable things,
To music like the flutter of Cherub's lissom wings;
A message grave, yet lowly, melodious, yet wild,
Like prophet's utt'rance holy, in language of a child:
He learnt its theme for ever, its music sad-some, bright,
And wove them both together, upon his Loom of Light . . .
The theme of Truth eternal, of Right's long war with Wrong,
Of Love 'gainst Hate infernal—the Poet's deathless Song.

* * * * *

Amongst the flowers before him, a golden Harp he found;
White pinions hovered o'er him . . . he trod on sacred ground . . .
Strange thrills of joy ran through him, a power 'yond human ken;
As his Beloved said to him: "Go, sing it now to MEN."

* * * * *

He rose . . . as though from dreaming, and all grew cold and dim;
A cruisie, faintly gleaming, revealed the chamber grim;
The warp was in a tangle, the woof was all awry;
He heard harsh voices wrangle, a pitying maiden sigh,

"Is this thy labour, sloven? Is thus thy living won?
Behold what thou hast woven, since rising of the sun!
Good linen can we barter, for daily meat and bread,
But thou, a lack-wit martyr, spin'st day-dreams with the thread.
To counsel thee is needless: we mate with thee no more!"
He turned from them as heedless, and crossed the threshold o'er.

* * * * *

Around him, in its beauty, a panting city lay,
He understood his duty; he did not grid, nor stay:
He passed on crowded highways, through Avenues of Art,
By slumland's grimy by-ways, 'midst workshop, school and mart:
Churches with close-barred portals, dwellings of wealth and pride,
'Midst rush of busy mortals, an ever-swelling tide:
He saw proud Rank, that flaunted its grandeurs to the poor,
And rose-crowned Vice, un-daunted, at Mammon's gilded door:
He saw the Base and Greedy the seats of honour fill,
The toilsome and the needy obedient to their will;
And 'midst the whirl of Folly, the cries of Woe and Pain,

And Joy and Melancholy, he tuned his mystic Strain.

* * * * *

From alleys foul and dreary, came forth a haggard throng,
Of poor, and sick, and weary, who listened to his song:
It echoed through the palace of Monarch and of Lord,
The priest turned from the Chalice, and mused upon his word:
The student in his quiet, the soldier 'midst the Broil
Of War's unhallowed riot, the workman at his toil:
Some heard it but to scoff it—"the Crazy Weaver he!"
Some said—"This is a Prophet: his Message is for ME."

Janua Vitæ

THERE is no Death. The darling ones we cherish,
Leave us awhile, urged by mysterious call:
No wee-est midge, no frailest flow'r can perish,
Eternal is the essence of us all;
A little sleep, behind Time's dusky curtain,
So still, so calm, we cannot feel its breath:
Then—Reawak'ning . . . hope of all hopes certain . . .
Love's life is endless life. There is no Death.

There is no Death. Mute lies the one belovèd,
As heeding not our bitter tears and sighs,
Since the White Wondrous-Angel o'er him hovered,
Clasping his hands, closing his shining eyes;
Yet, all unseen, his spirit stands beside us:
"Dear hearts, we soon shall meet again," it saith,
"Where pain and sorrow can no more divide us,
Love's life is endless Life. There is no Death."

The Lesson

I

ALL golden bright the whin-moor lay,
All silvern white the haze-flecked lea;
'Yond misted holts, the link of day
Dipped blazing in a restful sea,
As, in a castle grey and grim,
A little prince of comely looks,
Sat poring, in a corner dim,
O'er curiously lettered books:
An aged King of valiant line,
Watched the fair lad, with gaze benign.

2

"Ælfred, 'tis passing hard to read
The blazoned scrip of vellum page;
If clerkly knowledge thou dost need,
Of Guthric seek the counsel sage;

Grave Guthric of the snow-white hair,
Who hath the golden key to lore,
And day by day, and year by year,
To wisdom addeth wisdom more;
To him take ignorance and doubt,
Who best, forsooth, can help thee out."

3

"In Cuthbert's Tower the sage doth dwell,
Like holy hermit, world-aloof,
Secluded, in his silent cell
From morn to night he searcheth Truth;
All matters doth his lore embrace—
From simplest flow'ret of the turf,
To farthest star in boundless space;
It spanneth heaven, it mineth earth;
Steward of Wisdom, he hath stored,
Within his mind, her priceless hoard."

4

'Midst tomes and charts grave Guthric stood,
As to him came the princeling fair:
A sombre man of haughty mood,
In cloak and gown of serge and vair:
Alembics, skulls of aspect dire,
Vials with Zodiac signs o'er-writ,
Strange reptiles, and a kiln of fire,
That with blue glow the chamber lit,
Inspired young Ælfred's soul with dread:
"Wisdom is terrible," he said.

5

"My dainty lad, what wouldst thou learn?
How Life's Elixir to distil?
How by the star-shifts to discern
The morrow's spell of weal or ill?
Or wouldst from stubborn Nature wrest,
With crucible, retort and flame,
The secrets hoarded in her breast?"
Replied the youth, with qualm of shame,
"I yearn not for such subtle lore—
Far simpler things I puzzle o'er."

6

"For learned Guthric, oft I bide
By simplest matters sorely vexed:
Thus ignorance doth chasten pride,
That is by fondest things perplexed:
Let me explain: last night a fire
Burnt down the hut of toilsome serf,
Yet spared the barn and stacks and byre,
Of grasping Godwin, thousands worth:
If heaven keep ward, why happed it so?"
"My little prince! . . . how should I know?"

7

For Rome our Abbot did set sail,
With golden gifts for Peter's shrine:
His ship was shattered by the gale,
On his green shroud the sea-gems shine;

Yet the same storm drave to our land,
A ruthless crew of pirate Dane,
Who harried it with blade and brand,
And left our holy Bishop slain;
If Christ o'er-rule, why came such woe?"
"I'sooth, because it happened so!"

8

"'Twas Selwig stole our dappled steer;
He owned the truth when Death drew nigh;
But Wulstan, racked, spake words in fear,
And guiltless for the theft did die;
Of broken heart his good-wife pined,
His pretty sons were held in shame;
They left their native home behind,
And never back to England came:
Why did the Wrong o'er Right prevail?"
"Justice, my Prince, doth often fail."

9

Ælfred turned from him with a sigh,
And down by Martin's Abbey hied,
Whence, as he passed the lich-gate by,
Rose peaceful strains of eventide;
There tarried he to hear them pray,
The simple monks of Benet's rule,
In hoods and cowls of homespun grey,
Around their gentle Abbot's stool:
The Even-song had but begun—
He caught the words: "Thy Will be done."

A silence lay upon the wold,
A silence lay upon the sea:
With now a bleating from the fold,
And now an owl-hoot from the tree;
The words were fraught with trustful calm,
"On earth, in heaven, Thy Will be done . . ."
They echoed in the solemn Psalm,
The Anthem and the Benison.
"To do Thy Will, gird me for Fight . . .
The weak to ward, the wrong to right."

Sonnets

I. TO DANTE

OFT have you led me through Inferno Deeps,
And Purgatory's Anguish-way, and given
My Soul a vision of Bliss-rest of Heaven.
On dizzy crests, and down terrific steeps
We passed, oblivious of Earth and Time;
And raptured by the weirdness of your lyre,
My spirit caught a glow of your fierce fire,
O Dante Alighieri, stern, sublime!
Yet most I love you, when, with head bowed low,
In proud Can Grande's Hall—how hard the pave!
You sighed for your loved Florence, and the wave
That ripples light 'neath Ponte Vecchio:
Caro San Giovanni, and the way,
Trodden by Beatrice, in far-off, happier day.

II. TO KEATS

NO memory of a long-since vanished day
Art thou to me, immortal Child of Song,
But present ever, with a shadowy throng
In that fair vision-land where most I stray,
And thou of all the dearest: for thy voice
Thrills me, as does, upon my heart, Love's hand:
And I roam with thee, on enchanted strand.
With a bright Company, my spirit's choice,
Where music-strains and poets' fancies meet,
And dance the dainty elves of phantasy,
Their magic fling to eerie melody
Of thy fantastic lyre, sadsome sweet,
Like to weird dream of mysteries untold,
'Midst hazy lily-fields, by fairy castles old.

III. TO MY INFANT DAUGHTER

HOW far thou hast to go, my little one,
Whose cherub-face is prest against my own,
The dearest, fairest face I e'er have known . . .
How far, before thy pilgrimage is done!
Through childhood's Wonderland of Innocence,
O'er girlhood's sunlit path, 'neath shelt'ring wings,
Unto that way of sweet Romance, where sings
His Serenade, Love's Troubadour; and thence
On road where Motherhood goes hand-in-hand
With Home's belovèd ones, o'er blooms or briar,
Maybe o'er grave-yard paths, with feet that tire,
And eyes tear-dimmed, in a too lonesome land!
Until the vale be crossed, and home-lights shine,
How far thou hast to go, O smiling Baby mine!

Horace. Ode XVIII Book II

"Non ebur neque aureum."

NO shining gold, nor ivory,
My ceiling decks, nor marble rare my Hall,
Not mine a mansion's luxury,
No winsome serving maids have I at call:
But better than all these have I,
Which makes the poor one courted by the great—
Knowledge and fearless honesty,
That their possessor lift from low estate;
From Gods, or dearest bosom-friend,
More do I ask, with this snug farm content?
To me, no windfall Luck does send,
Nor has Wealth favoured me, when indolent.
As pass along the fleeting days,
Why, grasping man, with one foot in the grave,
With anxious care new House dost raise,
Its walls adorn, and plan the studded pave?
Thy borders wherefore widening,
Encroaching on thy neighbour, whom thy greed,
Exulting, does to ruin bring,
But for what gain, unto what end, indeed?
O sordid man, and treacherous,
The maw of Death is open: 'scape is none:
Naught half so sure awaiteth us,
Unto dark Doom thou swift dost journey on:
For rich and mean, the Charnel-house
Is ready: Craft nor pride can fate delay:
So too, poor hind laborious,
Tho' called by name or not, must needs the hint obey.*

* The sarcastic finesse of "Vocatus atque non vocatus audit" is not communicable in one line of English.

Horace. Ode VII Book IV

"Diffugere Nives."

THE snows have melted: meadowlands and trees
Enlace Spring's gems of green:
Earth has her youth renewed, and thro' gay leas
The tamed floods glide serene:
Now all the Nymphs and Graces naked dance,
For chilly winds have passed,
Hours, raveners of Day, as they advance,
Warn Life, it may not last:
Spring, breaking icy thrall, to summer yields,
In turn, to Autumn, she:
Then, orchards stripped, and reaped the harvest-fields,
Comes Winter's penury:
Renewing Months, the Moon for change atones,
And Nature's charms revives:
But, Dust and Shadow, we poor mortal ones
May not repeat our lives;
And tho' the Gods some few to-morrows grant,
To greedy heirs' dismay,
Pitiless Destiny will not recant,
So, feast we, whilst we may!
Nor noble Birth, nor Virtues, Gifts of Mind,
Can stay the summoned Breath . . .
Life's severed threads e'en Gods may not re-bind,
Nor break the chains of Death.

A Tender Chord

1

HOW gay you are to-night!
Bright as the yule-log's glow:
Your step seems just as light
As sixty years ago!
The Virginal was never
Touched by a firmer hand,
And gracefully as ever,
You dance the Saraband.

2

Yet, sixty years have passed,
Since you and I were wed,
For old Time travels fast,
Though silent in his tread:
When those white locks were golden,
How different was the day!
Faces and fashions olden,
Alike have passed away!

3

Yet home is just the same
As in that happy tide,
When first to it you came,
My eighteen summers bride:

Yet think you not the holly
Had brighter berries then—
That lasses showed less folly,
More chivalry the men ?

4

I notice that you wear
A treasured little ring :
Set with a braid of hair—
What mem'ries to it cling !
Of what fond love the token,
That flossy, flaxen tress—
Of highest earth-hope broken,
Of pure and gentle Bess !

5

How much she was like *you* !
Her voice had just your tone :
Her eyes the sun-lit blue
Reflected from your own !
And oft when you address me,
Her voice I seem to hear,
And when your arms caress me,
I think our darling near !

6

Nay, shed no tears to-night,
Noël must see no pain,
Though there come back to sight
A cherished face again :

For spirits round us linger,
Responsive to a word:
To-night, with viewless finger,
They touch a tender chord.

7

And most at Christmas-tide,
When all is peace and mirth,
They hover at our side,
Uniting Heaven and Earth:
No creepy ghosts of gloaming,
In ghastly shrouds arrayed,
Thro' murky grave-yards roaming,
Affrighting and afraid:—

8

But like the starry beams,
That cheer a darksome night,
They mingle with our dreams,
Kind messengers of Light:
And now, whilst snow-flakes flutter,
And midnight bells chime low,
Come . . . I've a word to utter,
Beneath the mistletoe!

Chatterton

A YOUNGLING of sciential mind,
A Cherub in the Depths astray,
A soul, like Orpheus, confined
In darksome tenement of clay.

Like dainty Barque, on 'furied wave,
That bears, thro' storms, a freight of flowers
Like rose that blossoms on a grave,
And fades before the morning hours,

This Boy, who took Fame's Harp of Gold,
And thrilled, with lambent touch, its strings,
And sang in tones of Bard of old,
Of Battles, Jousts and Revellings:

Who reared, in his fantastic brain,
A quaint medieval Citadel,
And in its shadowy domain,
As 'raptured anchorite did dwell.

Until, to his entrancêd Thought,
Romance and Truth were both akin,
And meshed his soul, with visions fraught,
In webs of wild imagining.

Too frail a creature to have dragged
An Atlas-load of Care along,
In sordid conflict bruised and fagged,
The nightingale create' for song.

As, struggling with temptations dire,
In penury and madding strife,
He snapped the chords of dulcet lyre,
And broke the melody of Life.

O rash young Hand, to rob all Time,
Of gems whose like hath Afra none;
As though the Gift, of all sublime,
Were made unto Oblivion!

O broken Heart's bewild'ring deed,
That flung such laurels in the dust,
And cast away, without a heed,
The treasures held in sacred trust!

God heard his anguished sob of pain,
And called him to His pitying breast
Dissolving that Despair's dark stain,
With Love's resistless Alcahest.

And after Death's supreme affright,
His spirit, on freed pinions borne,
Passed, from the agony of Night,
Into the ecstasy of Morn.

To a Skylark

WHAT lures thee to Aurora's dizzy height,
Thou little tenant of a lowly nest,
To region higher than the Eagle's flight,
And with such ardour thrills thy tiny breast ?
What gives thy fragile wing
Such zest unwearying,
To puny form, that scarce its heart can hold,
The impetus to rise to Heav'n's Gates of Gold ?

Thou seemest not of earth, Seraphic Bird,
Naught is there worldly in thy roundelay,
Whose ev'ry note is as a clarion heard,
Along the shore thou leavest far away :
Rise, flutter, flutter, rise,
Sweet minstrel of the skies,
Thy dulcet voice to Heav'n doth belong,
Thy carol is a part of all Creation's Song !

With trills, and throbs, and quiverings that blend
With triumph-strains of Beatific Throng :
Hosannahs of wild joy, whose echoes end
Like whispers of Love's languish, ling'ring long :
Tune that thy first sire sang,
That thro' the first Dawn rang,
Sweet as that Anthem on transcendent Height,
Quired by the morning stars, to Him Who gave
them light.

Thy notes are scattered, like the sparks that fly
From Music's smithy, where a pigmy Band
Of Oberon's elves at magic Anvil ply,
In Cavern of enchanted Echo-Land :
Cries as of Cherubim,
In distance dying dim ;
Lilt as of clarinets, like fanfare shrill,
Piped by Pan's merry lads, aside a rushing rill !

Lift, lift thy voice, thy wings, and higher soar,
Beyond the hazes, to the perfect day !
In raptured glee that star-strewn path explore,
The Bourne of Harmonies, Song's sacred way . . .
Retrace not thy bold flight,
Forget the sphere of Night,
Take my soul with thee, to that realm of glows,
Merged in thy ecstasy, forgetful of its woes !

Yet earthwards too, to heart-depths, falls thy strain :
Some age-bent peasant, weeding 'midst the rye,
Some love-sick farm-lad, trudging by the wain,
Or Cotter's wife, an empty cradle nigh,
Will list to it awhile,
With mem'ry's sigh or smile ;
Shephered, on stilly wold, thy carol hears,
Or Scarer, in lone field, by solitary meres.

Yet—! 'midst the song, the tremor of a sigh !
Alas, wild heart, not wholly art thou free !

Only thy Anthem must remain on high,
Earth calls, with tender voice, and thou must flee . . .
Descend, again descend,
Downwards, and homewards wend . . .
Forsake the radiant mansions of the morn,
Low, lower . . . loved one, lower . . . to Nest
among the Corn!

The Priestess of Ida.

I. LOVE'S BIRTH

1

THE Voice is Hers, that floats on sultry air,
Down the vast nave of Ida's rose-decked
Fane,
Whose altar is her Glory and her Care—
Thro' lofty Porch, where swells its solemn strain,
To waters that with lazy ripples flow,
As tho' it fain would reach
That shore beyond the Hellespont's blue tide,
Yet dallies, to and fro,
With murmurs of warm breezes on the beach,
Where tired halcyons preen, and sea-gulls languid
glide.

2

There is Nepenthe in the glow of noon,
Which drowses the scant-vestured worshippers,
And sends the Choric Hymn, as tho' aswoon,
On quav'ring pinions unto Ida's ears:

Like drone of bees among acanthus flow'rs,
Where mavis softly sings.
In archèd groves, 'neath sky of purple hue,
Or, 'midst a marsh's bow'rs,
The stert'rous hum of dragon-flies, with wings
Like sheen of rainbow, rayed on silvern mist of dew.

3

The gorgeous Rite, the music's subtle charm,
Lullaby raptured souls to mystic dream
Of Faith's Elysian Gul-gardens calm,
On Life's drear waste a transient mirage-dream,
Of pastures fairer than Arcadia,
Where, by Castalian rill,
Blissful souls wander thro' a blossomed mead,
Than Thrace's shadier,
Where the hard turmoil of harsh lot is still,
And Time comes not with Care, nor Tyranny with
Greed.

4

A dulcet Gong chimes thro' the Temple vast,
Thyme and sweet mints about the Apse are strewn,
The eyes of choristers on Leader cast,
And ev'ry falt'ring harp-chord set a-tune;
Swaying bright Censers, the veiled vestals move;
Chaste maids, youths undefiled,
In chlamys white, sing verses sibylline
To Queen of Grace and Love,
Whilst gaze the multitude with eyes of child,
And human worship change, by faith, unto Divine.

5

The twitter of meek swallows on the eaves,
And cooing of the white-winged Captive birds,
A breeze's sough, rustle of dusky leaves,
Low murmur of the Consecrating words,
Mar not the happy indolence of Day,
Nor cymbal's tinkle-stroke,
By soft hands lightly trilled, like those that tune
The lyre, to slumb'rous lay
Of whisper-music, till the strain evoke
A lull of tender dream, that passes all too soon.

6

Such dream as *thou* art dreaming, Priestess sanct,
Whilst dainty Eros wantons with thy heart,
Who thro' these solemn mysteries hath pranked,
Thy breast the target of his fire-barbed Dart!
In the dread pauses, as each censer swings,
And virgins chorus praise,
Blithely the minion God disports around
On sun-beam woven wings,
Which, as they flutter, shed love-wak'ning rays
O'er the white altar-steps, where standst thou,
myrtle-crowned.

7

'Neath Canopy of ivory and gold,
That domes the marbled form of Ida fair,
Divinity revealed in human mould,
Veiled with the tresses of her radiant hair:

Gentle, voluptuous: with dimpled arms,
And shoulders blanch of snow:
Her budding breasts with foam-like cincture bound,
And lower, with gems aglow,
The mystic Cestus of her am'rous charms;
Majesty, Beauty, Grace, tow'ring o'er all around.

8

O'er jasper pillars, lazula in-laid,
With flawless Capitals from Paros brought,
Tripods of chiselled bronze, and lamps of jade,
And statues such as Policlitus wrought,
In niches glittering with scrolled patine
Of agate, pearl and gold,
And spangled pavement of mosaic maze
Gemmed with spars hyaline:
And broidered tapestries of flossy fold,
Such as Penelope did weave thro' sadsome days.

9

A scent of vermeil roses steeps the sense,
As to the golden Altar dost thou go,
Where burns the hallowed fire with flame intense,
Whilst rises music tremulous and slow:
Then, bashfully advancing to thy side,
A Thracian stripling fair,
With gay Adonis flow'rs garlanded,
And locks with fillet tied,

Doth in his hands the incense-casket bear,
From which the spicy grains on the pure glow are spread.

10

Rise, Poem-Hymns of Hellas, sweet as she,
Myth or Immortal—if both be not one—
Whose sway benign doth compass land and sea,
From chasms Ægean, to peak of Helicon:
"We celebrate Thee, Thou that from the Foam,
Blest Genitrix, didst rise:
Daughter of Zeus, the Omnipotent,
Who hast in Sestos home,
And never our oblations didst despise,
But to our orisons propitious ear hast lent!"

11

Thus from the Chorus: From thy heart, pang-wrung,
What other earnest message soars above,
To Her, the ever-beauteous and young,
Who, too, hath known th' imperious thrall of Love?
"O, Thou that oft didst feel th' impassioned dart,
And yield to fond desire,
And mortal clasp to thy immortal breast,
And nurse the am'rous smart,
That ev'ry thrill of Eros did inspire,
Calm my blood's riot, or grant my love-sick soul's request!'

12

Priestess—yet Woman ! by that name is meant,
Love, Passion, Tenderness, and all their kin :
Home-sway, be it in palace, hut, or tent,
Soul-soothe 'gainst strife without, and care within :
For this th' immortal pow'rs did fashion thee,
In Beauty's rarest mould :
Like Dian shaped : eyes deep as Hellespont,
Lips that allure the bee,
And locks the hue of Vulcan's molten gold ;
Can Love affront thy Vow, or doth it Love affront ?

13

Thy gaze is on the porphyry Altar-slab,
Thy thought is in Abydos, nigh to him,
Whose shafted love-glance did thy bosom stab ;
That graceful youth, comely of mind and limb,
Fair as Apollo, and as Artes bold,
Whose ev'ry breath is thine,
And in whose breast, alike, doth burn a flame,
To which is furnace, cold—
Such as did glow in Her, thy Queen divine,
For him whose hapless doom to Ceres' flower gave
name.

14

The chorus blends to diapason swell,
Reed, lyre, and systrum in sweet unison,
As tinkles softly the Oblation bell,
And lifted hands implore a benison ;

The azure fumes of bloodless sacrifice,
Fragrant with thus and myhrr,
Mingle with pray'rs for boons by earth denied,
That from sad soul-depths rise,
And, thro' the roof's wide orifice, to Her
One wingèd homage soars, like lark at morning-tide.

15

Yet listless thou, as seeing, hearing not,
Or with dream-haunted sight, and ears where sounds
A strain by harp of Ariel begot,
For mist, than incense dimmer, all surrounds.
The circling vestals,[1] and the suppliant throng,
Are blotted from thine eyes:
Thou roamest with Leander, all alone,
Thro' woodland alley long
Of Sestos vale, 'neath silent, starlit skies:
Its radiant peace, thy soul's . . . its realm all thine own!

16

Thus oft the cloistered Vestal chafes and frets
At irksome rule, with longings to be free,
As heard a distant lilt of clarinets
And joyance of young Hymen's revelry,

[1] The term "Vestal," strictly applied, refers only to the Order of Consecrated Virgins instituted by Numa, but is used, in a general sense, to designate the maidens attached to other temples than that of Vesta.

That break the dull monotony of chaunt,
With thoughts of spring-times gone,
In the dim Temple aisles, where phantoms roam
That the sad mem'ry haunt,
With mute reproach to the forsaken one,
Yearning, with woman's heart, for cradle-joys of
Home.

17

The Rite concludes: the choir with Pæan ends
Its stasimon august: loud blasts are blown,
As, from the Altar, thy lithe form descends,
Calm and austere of gaze, and passes on.
A thousand hands wave myrtle boughs in air,
Whilst, in procession led,
By guards with flashing breast-plate, sword and
shield.
Slowly thou dost repair,
With Vestal band, and Servers hushed of tread,
To inner claustery, from world profane concealed.

18

Thus closes Pageant of Adonian days:
The beauteous Goddess hath been glorified,
By incense-offerings and hymns of praise,
And human Love and Passion deified:
Full many a fair Adonis in that crowd
To many an Ida turned,

With thrilling look, seductive whisper low,
To meet sweet glance—or proud,
Granting, denying boon for which he yearned,
Less bashful than that boy in Cyprus long ago.

19

To vine-clad homesteads under shelt'ring trees,
Return the youthful choristers in glee:
Down shady lanes divide the devotees,
To workshop, Stadium, or revelry;
Coarse-chiton'd slaves with slothful feet depart
To wine-press, anvil, flail:
Matrons and girlish wives to tasks of home,
To garden or to mart:
Then, laying censers by, the Vestals pale
Pass, some to silent aisle: to sylvan quiet some.

20

Hero, sad Celebrant of mysteries, such
As the glad Goddess did for joy ordain—
The myrtle-crown falls earthward at thy touch,
But not thy maidhood's consecrating chain;
Nor meditative aisle, nor song-stirred grove,
Can solace thy sad lot:
All dreamily thou roamest, to and fro,
Discarding flow'r of Love,
For sympathetic blue Forget-me-not,
Set on thy heaving breast, as tho' to cool its glow.

21

Poor Human Heart! made out of daintier stuff,
Than Pallas on her loom did ever weave!
Of fleeting joys the warp, fond hopes the woof,
That tears and smiles and sighs do interwreathe;
Fabric as lissom as the mist of morn,
And fragile as the web
Spun by Arachne o'er a spreading rose,
And tethered to its thorn:
Wrecked by a zephyr, or a dew-drop's ebb—
Yet what fierce conflicts thine, what passions, and
what throes!

22

Day pales to Even: Even dims to Night,
Whose myriad lamps are mirrored on the Strait:
Motherly hands trim Hestia's sacred light,
Guardian of home unto her consecrate:
Silence keeps ward in household, camp and shrine.
His couch the royst'rer seeks,
And gadding roams the solitary wind,
O'er wolds and vales, where vine
And amber corn-sheaves range in mist-hazed
streaks,
By cosy farm and byre, and hut of lowly hind.

23

Not over pregnant fields, but barren cliff,
And sail-less waves, the eyes of Hero peer;

From her high rock-perked stony tower, as if
T'entice the lover, distant, albeit near;
And from this trysting place, 'twixt heav'n and
earth,
Aloft, like lode-star bright,
Stanchioned a torch, that flickers in the breeze,
And shimmers o'er the surf,
Till, thro' the purple valances of night,
A watchful eye, afar, the luring Beacon sees.

II. LOVE'S LIFE

1

Not alway placid is old Hellespont,
As in this over-gracious summer-mood,
But turbulent and treacherous his wont,
As spleenful as his Sire, Ægea's flood;
Nor must the mariner his shoals ignore,
Cross-currents, whirlpools dire;
Holding all barques, save Nautalus, at bay,
From reef-bound shore to shore,
When, scorning human skill, he drives with ire,
Man's venturous galleons from his uncharted way.

2

As knowest thou, Youth of Abydos, taught
By many a struggle with the jealous brine,
As with thy love-lit eyes thou gaz'st athwart,
These breakers, that like fortress walls confine

Thy heart's heart, as an alien, from thy breast:
Yet they still less do ward,
Than doth the sacerdotal vow her soul!
O passion all-unblest!
Such sacred bond hath the most lawless awed:
Its thraldom is divine, yet cannot thee control!

3

Leander, fair as Hyacinth, yet framed
In firmer flesh, imbrued with wilder blood,
The ardour of thy soul cannot be tamed,
E'en by the chilly waves; its hardihood
Matched with youth's tenderness, speaks from those eyes
That ebon lashes shade,
Whose lustre, sole, adventurous maid dares face,
Reckless of dearest prize:
The brawny muscles on thy limbs displayed,
Attest the subtle strength and prowess of bold race.

4

"Daughter of Sestos, thou dost call—I come!
These swelling billows shall my Argo be:
With limpid sails of soft Idalian foam,
And friendly winds shall helm and compass me;
Unto the shelt'ring haven of thy arms,
Bourne where I fain would bide
For ever in a sweet security,

From hurricane's alarms:
For Death or thou shall only be my bride!
Thou callest me to-night; choice of my heart, I come!"

5

Quickly the woollen Chiton is unhasp,
And Hellespont looks on thy viril grace,
Then, as remindful of a tend'rer clasp,
Its waves, with joyous bound, thy form embrace,
And carry thee exultingly along,
Kissing thy cheeks aglow,
But thy braw arms fling their soft grasp aside,
With measured stroke and strong:
Now carried on their crests, now breasting low,
But ever onwards borne by the enamoured tide,

6

That gently sets thee on the Thracian shore,
To cavern where some thoughtful Naiad's hand
Hath garments strung, and linen, to wipe o'er
Drenched limbs and locks: scarcely art thou on land,
Than, wrapt in genial hemation's fold,
Quickly thou dost up-climb
The horrent crags that base thy treasure tower,
And, like to Eros bold,
Outstepping the too laggard pace of Time,
Tak'st Hero unawares, tearful, in silent bower.

7

To clasp her to thy bosom, chide her fears,
Compel her smile, and laugh away her frown,
And kiss with sultry lips her coursing tears,
And fondle her soft hands, and nestle down
In fervid banter-dalliance at her feet,
Is history retold,
The old, old story, that, since earth was young,
Her children's lips repeat:
Clown-stammered, bard entuned on harp of gold,
The self-same tender lay, to many a variant sung.

8

"Sweet Hero, tomes of argument are writ
In these two words: 'I love' . . . I ask not more
Than thou shouldst echo them, and doing it,
Teach me, Love's priestess, how I must adore!
Take all my world, and add to it thine own,
But grant me, in return
Of all the realm of self-dom dispossest,
Some sheltered, happy coign;
A breast, as cushion for these cheeks that burn,
Elysium of thy arms, where I may dream and rest!"

9

"For since we met, my life seems quite undone,
I lose all ardour, and I lack all will:
I am self-negligent, and study shun,
Vacant in converse, inalert at drill:

Or I grow maudlin, and I carve thy name,
On rock, or forest tree,
And scribble jingling verses by the score,
Or roam, with heart aflame,
Alone on woodland paths, or by the sea,
Or watch thy Pharo-light, long hours thro', from
the shore."

10

"And on my couch by night I cannot sleep,
For Morpheus flees, whilst Eros bides within,
And oft, when saddened by the watch I keep,
Silenus lures, with Dion's royster-din,
To orgia where wines that mist the brain,
Mirth's golden goblets fill,
Awhile the lewd Anacreon's Teos muse
Excites with giddy strain,
And Phalli, ivy-twined, and systrum shrill,
And wild Cotyttia, chaste Dian do confuse."

11

"O, Hero, thou canst save me from myself,
And thine own heart from the accurst despair,
That feeds like Vampire on the blood of health,
That hispid-visaged Ghoul, hate-child of Care!
O, let a goddess shew thee precedent,
Who did a mortal woo,
And naught of wrong in such sweet dalliance see,
That youth, with flesh all rent,
Whose life-stream gave th' anemone its hue:
Adonis is he hight, and Aphrodite she."

12

She asks: "What of my vow, confirmed above,
When registered on earth, by rite divine,
On altar sacro-sanct? Can carnal love
That pact dissolve? Leander, 'twere a crime,
And yet . . . and yet . . . my heart and soul rebel
'Gainst Heav'n . . . and 'gainst *thee*!
The lily thou wouldst pluck is mine to ward,
And it were trespass fell,
To shield the one who would its spoiler be;
Yet, as Love's ministress, how dare I Love discard?"

13

"And if this tryst were known, what tumult dire!
The folk would rise, their veils my vestals tear,
T'avenge the goddess, and appease her ire:
In frenzy of a panic-maddened fear,
Vile Bacchæ, with the thyrsus and red torch,
To ev'ry lewdness vowed,
Enraged to hear of dignity disgraced,
Would storm my temple porch,
And to a living tomb, in blackened shroud,
Drag me—foul Circe's hordes—e'en for a breath unchaste!"

14

"The vulgar crowd esteems me half-divine,
Impassive, and incapable of wrong:

As though a block in-builded of its shrine,
Or harp whereon to sound its worship song:
Confined like hamadryad to the tree,
On Naiad to the rill,
And prisoned with me all my heart's desires,
By Jailor Chastity:
So that its ardent flames in ice-air chill,
Or burn in Altar-groove, for sacrificial fire!"

15

"Hero, if Love were but a wanton's breath,
That whim could summon, and a frown dispel,
And not that Potentate who laughs at Death,
Whom torture, and the nether-murk of Hell,
Destroy not, nor dismay, then might we fear
The soul-less rabble's hate:
But I would smile at Doom, for smile of thine,
And hold Life no-wise dear,
Defy the gods, and bite my thumb at fate,
All dare, and all endure—only to know thee mine."

16

So faint her answer, that the list'ning night
Hears not its murmur, and the ev'ning star
That 'lumes her chamber with Idalian light,
Dims not her errant ray, nor hides afar
Her sapphire lustre: Bar the heavy door,
Alike on friend and foe,
Out-curtain wraiths that darkling hours appal,
Spirits of sea and moor,

And then, as fainter wanes the lamp's soft glow,
Throb tender heart to heart, and Love be all in all!

17

And thou, Enterpe too, away shalt flee,
And hang thy harp on branchlet of the dell:
For here is all-sufficient melody,
Strains as of Orpheus and Ariel:
And rose-crowned fays of Eros shall o'er-twine
This bower with dimmet-screen,
Of wood-bine trail, leafy convolvulus,
Ivy, and clustered vine,
So that no sound disturb the hours serene,
Save that sweet music fraught with whispers amorous.

18

O, Love, this is thy Victory! the doom
That pomp, power, pride o'erwhelms, thy spell evades!
Thou art of subtler and more strenuous bloom,
Than all the amaranths of Glory's glades . . .
Death cannot conquer thee: thou art eterne,
Where all things else are frail:
Not earth engendered, but of Paradise,
And thither must return,
Quitting on seraph's wings Time's dreary vale,
As phœnix from the pyre up-soars into the skies.

* * * * *

19

Sits young Aurora on Hymettus height,
Wafting her saffron pinions in the haze,
That fret with spangles the sad weeds of night,
Till all the East with glory is ablaze.
Down slide her couriers in mail a-shine,
Pert link-boys of the day,
Creeping to vestal's chamber, or to Queen's,
And cells where captives pine,
Tickling maids' bosoms with a saucy ray,
And peeping, prurient, thro' Beauty's jealous screens.

20

And, all too early, bringing Mandate stern,
Bidding Love leave a rapture brief as blest,
And Sorrow from oblivious slumber turn,
To her sad lot of trouble and un-rest:
Now, on yon sun-kissed billows, crooning low,
Their mattins to the dawn,
'Ere glows the hearth, on yonder side the straight,
Leander, homewards, go,
Like sea-bird, thro' the shimmer of the morn,
And thy enchantress Dream, back thro' the Ivory Gate!

III. LOVE'S PASSING

1

Impulsive Nature, alien to repose,
Forming, destroying, on thy rampant way,

Now decking Earth, now racking her with woes,
As busy at Creation as decay:
Thy traffic knows no pause, thy course no goal,
Bartering Life for clod,
Endowing, disinheriting thine own!
Wherefore some deem thee an impassive God,
Blind force of ruthless law, omnipotent alone.

2

Just now, thou wert a smiling mother fond,
Rocking thy cradle in a mood serene—
From Sestos to Abýdos shore beyond,
No earnest of a rankling of thy spleen;
A little while ago, of minutes brief,
Thy breath was zephyr-fraught:
Placid thy hand upon the water's brow,
Peace—o'er, around, beneath—
And lo! to anger goaded, as by naught,
'Vengeful Megæra like, ruthless in fury, thou!

3

Thro' the dread realm of the hurricane,
The tritons' trumpets sound with racking din:
Dissolving clouds yield livid sheets of rain,
Fiend-whirled, in furies' dance, the eddies spin.
Benighted sea fowl o'er cleft billows flee,
With piercing screams, that scare
Shorefolk who tumble fearfully abed,
And pray with craven plea,
Un-witted by the lightning's trespass flare,

And thunder's war-like roar, in shattering forts
o'erhead.

4

Barred are the brazen gates of Ida's shrine,
All dashed the myrtle in its sacred grove:
Cypress and oak their haughty heads incline
To angry gales, that buccaneering rove;
The bird of omen from dark crevice shrieks,
Whilst Erebus, with groan,
Fills echoing caverns by the seething waves,
And howls around the peaks;
Carrion ravens croak, and lean wolves moan,
In darksome ravines bleak, and Murder's secret caves.

5

On the drenched wold no farer is abroad,
From flooded streets the townfolk refuge seek;
Fishers, by Father Neptune's anger awed,
At ingle snooze, their barques safe moored in creek:
Stern sentinels in shelt'ring porches cower,
And legionaries flee,
With imprecations, to their soaking tents,
Whilst Hero in her tower,
Looks out on the minacious arm of sea,
That stretches to divide two hearts and continents.

6

"Ye Gods! he vowed at fall of night to come . . .
What if he keep his word, despite your ire?

The hurricane, so terrible to some,
Only with daring may his soul inspire:
Oh, nameless Woe, if he no beacon see,
Awhile he breasts the tide!
And greater woe, if to a watery grave
My torch his guidance be!
Betwixt two perils that my soul divide,
Great Ida, help me choose—if thou indeed canst save!"

7

There is a speck amid the roaring main,
An atom of humanity, in throe
With tow'ring billows, hissing blasts and rain,
By battling currents harried to and fro:
As dauntless as the Nautalus's barque,
A god-like human form,
Thro' caves abysmal swirled, tossed high on spray,
'Midst horrors Orcus-dark,
Daring the shrieking spirits of the storm,
Like famished wolves, long pent, that close around their prey.

8

Thus, oft, a restless soul, elate with hope,
Doth brave, intrepid, the wild storm of strife,
With winds and breakers of misfortune cope,
For such poor gauds as tempt its little life:
Lured by Ambition's will o' wisp afar,
O'er perilous expanse,
For name or fame, a ribbon, or a smile—
And, crost the seething Bar,

Is death-dashed on the reef-chain of Mischance,
That girds the shadowy shore of Fortune's phantom
Isle.

9

Woe-beset Priestess! that thine eyes must see,
In lightning sheen, what doth their vision sear!
False Hellespont! in vain he trusted thee,
It is Leander! he, at last, is near!
As though by chisel wrought in Parian stone,
On the jagged shore-rocks cast,
With blood's red garland wreathed, his corse lies
bare:
Weep, beat thy breasts, and moan!
This is great Ida's benison at last . . .
She, whom thou long hast served, thus-wise hath
answered pray'r!

10

Thus-wise! the gods weep not—albeit 'tis said,
Laughter is from the gods, who nectar quaff
In bliss, and on Ambrosia are fed:
They weep not, the Immortals . . . yet they
laugh!
. . . And goad the Spiteful Fates, who willed this
tryst
To be all else unlike,
In truth or romaunt: which shall Clio write
Dark, on her tragic List:
No minion's ballad: theme for such as strike
Melpomene's shrill lyre, whose chords the soul
affright!

11

More blessèd if begot in meanest birth,
Un-chrismed in a sacerdoce sublime,
Than famous, leave a memory on earth,
To sadden with its woes the ears of Time!
Like that queen-bird that trilleth with her heart,
Prest 'gainst the piercing thorn,
The sweetest singeth when her breast doth swell,
With the intensest smart,
The burden of her rhapsody forlorn—
Echo, from Eden's gate, of Paradise farewell.

12

Distraught thou standest, Hero, stern and pale,
With hands tight-clasped, and gaze of mortal dread,
Heedless of dashing spray, and yelling gale—
Look not to Heav'n . . . *her* star no ray doth shed,
Nor yet to Earth, for Love's link is out-trod:
Its brightness passed, on ways
Where wend pure souls, the dear ones Nature gave,
Voices that cheered life's road,
Child-faces, music-whispers, young Love's lays—
Haven of all blest things, not garnered by the grave.

13

"O, Love that sole art lovely! Lacking thee,
All else is sordid dross, and Hades-care!
Far shall my spirit on its pinions flee;
Dark is Death's door-way, but thy realm is fair!
For 'yond the murk which shrouds this hour of Life,
Is there no Land of Light,

Guerdon of Virtue, Heroism, Worth,
Self-sacrifice and Strife ?
Or only silence of unconscious Night,
Smother of fun'ral pyre, and gloom of darksome
earth ? "

14

" I ask the wondrous skies : they answer not—
I ask the kindly earth—and it is dumb ;
Is this a knowledge mortals have forgot,
Or only to be learnt in Life to come ?
What is the Eon within me, which out-cries,
—' I cannot—will not die ! '
And suffers, loves, and hopes, and ever yearns,
Like larklet, for the skies :
What is this subtle thing the mind calls *I* ?
May it, like its frail film, to air and dust return ? "

15

" If this be all—a dance, 'neath blissful gods,
Of zany wights upon a round of clay,—
Then hapless we, grief-animated clods,
With Life's gift curst, and cruel tyrants they !
O, let me drink of Joy's clear Hippocrene,
Or drain the lethal Draught,
Of Mandragora, that Narcosis brews,
For naught there is between,
Save easeless heart-rack of existence daft ;
And Death must needs be gain, when Life but woes
doth lose."

16

" Wail, mournful winds, for ev'ry sweetness fled !
My heart is riven, and its hope hath passed :
There stark and bleeding my Beloved lies dead,
White as the foam his flesh, and cold as blast :
In billowy shroud the fair Leander lies,
Death's jetsam to my shore—
His glossy ringlets wreathed with oozing surf,
Light-less his up-turned eyes :
My heart, like his, will gladden nevermore,
Come, Phantoms of the Storm, sing Chorus to my
Dirge ! "

17

" O, garland me a wreath, black Sprites, to-night,
Of wolf's-bane, bitter rue, and hemlock rank,
Fungus, and slimy herbs of mildew blight,
With verjuice stalks, and stenchful berries dank—
And sombre sprigs sacred to Proserpine,
Cypress, and mournful Yew,
Worn by sad shades in Acheron's dim cave,
And clothe this body mine
With chilly cerements, for Death doth woo—
And deck my bridal couch with trappings of the
Grave ! "

18

Those eyes, tempestuous as Hellespont,
Have looked their last across all troublous sea . . .
Sad Memory no more thy soul shall haunt,
Nor Care, with all her Court of Misery ;

Nor Death, nor chasm deep, shall now divorce
Thee, from thy cherished Dead,
As, wrapt about with Time's last streaks of gloom,
Thou seest again his corse,
From the cliff's head-land, lit by lightnings dread,
And, calling on his name, leapst to his rocky tomb!

19

Louder the Night-bird screams on storm-swept track,
And moans the sullen sea in troubled vogue,
Tridents of flame, and awesome thunder-rack
Climax the Tragedy, whose Epilogue,
The keening Wind, 'midst Heav'n's drenching tears,
Chaunts threnody forlorn,
As thou down the dark precipice art cast,
And down the endless years—
Still, and to generations yet unborn,
A name to fond hearts dear, which long as Love will last.

* * * * *

20

Goddess of Beauty! in thy silent shrine,
Before their hour, the roses shed and die . . .
The lustrous doves on drooping pinions pine,
And orphaned vestals wring their hands and sigh:
In Death's arms lies thy priestess consecrate,
Thy lauds no longer sung . . .
Sorrow, dim-eyed, sits brooding in the choir,
By altar desolate—

The festal wreaths Adonian unstrung:
Rayless the votive lamps, and quenched the sacred
Fire.

THE LILIES

I

A soothing fragrance steals upon my sense,
Fraught with awakened memories, and brings
Visions of nooks in verdurous woodland dense,
And leads my thoughts to byegone times, and
things
Awhile forgot: and I am back on ways
Long stranger, that I once familiar trod:
An orchard's winding path, a garden's maze,
Where their fair heads Madonna lilies nod—
Like white-veiled nuns, at chime of sacring bell,
Or gossamer-clad nymphs, surprised in lonesome
dell.

2

For here, on a drab Slum-land's window-sill,
'Gainst grime-clammed patchy panes, in baleful air,
Grow two tall lilies, that with sweetness fill
A sultry garret chamber, small and bare,
Perked high above a By-way's buzzing din—
The welter of an under-world, where dwell
Down-trodden folk, midst want and care and sin,
As 'neath the blight of a malignant spell—
And bloom as bright as on Idalian lea,
Or myrtle-mantled shore of the blue Marmora Sea.

3

Here is no merry hum of Hybla bees,
No zephyr wandered from soft-swaying pines,
And silvern shadows of wild olive trees:
Nor splash of brooklet, that pellucid shines
Where iris-rushes lift their purple crests
To the caresses of the dragon-flies:
No twilight serenade from bush-hid nests,
Nor carol echoed from dawn-dappled skies—
Yet beauteous they, where Beauty else is banned:
Sweet as was Ruth, in Judah's stranger-land.

4

And I behold the lilies how they grow,
That neither toil nor spin, yet in array,
Salem's proud King, in all his glory's glow,
And pomp of state, was not adorned as they:
Ashine with jewels of the lucent dew,
By Hecate's eldritch alchemists distilled
In Night's alembics, that the nectar brew
Wherewith are Ceres' glist'ning goblets filled:
Bright as the pearls in queenly coronet,
Or a lone mother's tears, when Love will not forget.

5

Do these pure flowers reproach me, that I sigh?
They blemishless, as snow on Andes height,
And sullied in the depths Avernine I . . .
Their souls all sweetness, and my own all blight:
Or that they blossomed upon childhood's way,
And in my broken life have played a part?

They decked the Altar on my wedding-day,
They grow upon a grave that holds my heart—
I gave their name to one I cherished most:
A Lily Death has culled, whose fragrance I have lost.

6

These are not passion's gauds, that wild-eyed Lust
Offers, with faithless vow, at Folly's shrine:
No wanton draggles in the mire and dust,
These emblems of the purity divine:
They clustered not with the voluptuous Rose
In wreath of Aphrodite, when she lay
Chiding Adonis, heedless in repose:
Nor for the car of Dion strewed the way:
These did the Virgins and the Poets choose . . .
They crown unsullied Youth, and the white-vestured Muse.

7

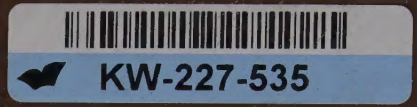
Yet where that Life by anguishes untorn,
By wrongs untrammelled? Man's, by his misdeeds,
As gentle Lily's by the savage thorn,
Or choking grip of poison-laden weeds:
Their lissom blooms are all athrob with Life,
The spices of the East imbrue their breath,
Yet must they brave the night with tempests rife,
Their roots go down into the dust of Death:
Decay is nearest when they fairest shine:
They are what humans are—half-mortal, half-divine.

8

There is a spirit in all living things,
And ev'ry spirit hath affinity:
The Seraph that thro' heights of Glory wings,
The gutter-child, inured to penury,
The Lily at my window-pane—are one,
In essence and in end: what way we go,
The generations of all Life have gone,
And God is nearer to us than we know;
Links of a chain that all Creation binds—
Transient forms to forms; immortal minds to minds.

9

Bloom, angel flow'rs! Your presence in this spot
Of sordid ugliness and squalid care
With magic glamour brightens Mis'ry's lot;
Let us dream on . . . dreams of Arcadia fair!
Sad faces, worn with pain, their meek looks turn
To your sweet chalices, and Eden see:
And beauties, that rude gaze may not discern,
Fill childish eyes: the pent soul seems more free,
The tainted heart grows purer at your sight,
Turning, with chastened throb, like you, unto the Light.


KW-227-535